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TITLE: Role of Angiogenesis in the Etiology and Prevention of Ovarian Cancer

II: Angiogenesis Factors in the Malignant Transformation of Ovarian Surface Epithelium

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 Words) Etiology of ovarian cancer is not completely understood. Previous studies have shown that both genetic and epigenetic factors could contribute to ovarian tumorigenesis. Epidemiological studies suggest that number of ovulation and ovulation related gonadotropin hormones could play a role in the malignant transformation of surface epithelium. In this project, we will investigate how the normal ovarian epithelium acquires tumorigenic phenotype. Specifically, the effect of angiogenic growth factors in the etiology of ovarian cancer is studied using a model system.		
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Table of Contents

Cover.....	
SF 298.....	1
Table of Contents.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Body.....	3
Key Research Accomplishments.....	5
Reportable Outcomes.....	5
Conclusions.....	6
References.....	6
Appendices.....	6

(4) INTRODUCTION:

The vast majority of ovarian cancers arise from the surface epithelium. Only a small percent of ovarian cancers are genetically linked. Epidemiological data clearly suggest that ovulation related events can be associated with ovarian cancer development. Recurrent process of wounding and repair during repeated ovulation is implicated in transformation of surface epithelium. Transformed cells are then selected *in vivo* for their ability to attract new blood vessels, angiogenesis, one of the necessary steps involved in the establishment of tumors. Secretion of angiogenic factors is prognostically significant. Furthermore, gonadotropic hormones can induce angiogenic factors in cell cultures. These studies lead to a possible relationship between, ovulation, ovulatory hormones and angiogenic phenotype. Based on these data, the present proposal is designed to investigate the role of angiogenic factors in the development of ovarian cancer.

(5) BODY :

In our "Statement of Work" we proposed to perform Task # 1 and #2 during the first 36 months. Task 1 and 2 are related the expression of angiogenic growth factor in surface epithelium of the ovary. To evaluate whether angiogenic growth factor play a role in the development of ovarian cancer.

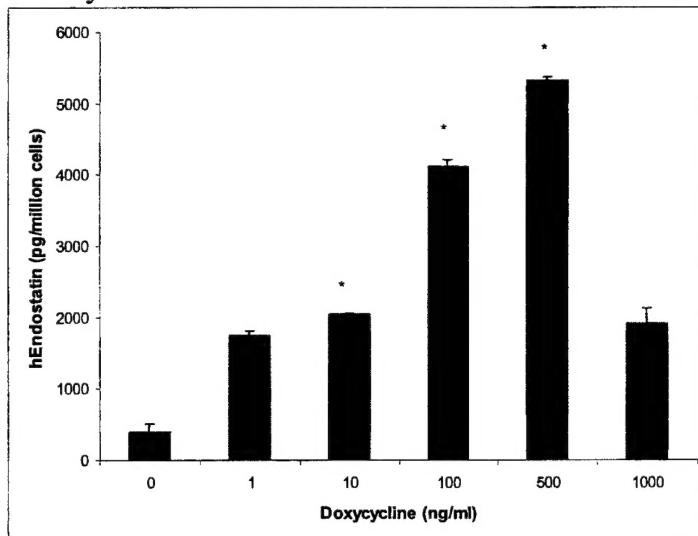
In the Year 3 report (2002) we described the tumorigenic potential of ROSE199 cells transfected with VEGF165. VEGF-ROSE cells formed tumors readily and formed malignant ascites when injected i.p. This model provided evidence for the role of VEGF in ovarian cancer development. Using this model we investigated whether neutralization of VEGF can revert the tumorigenic phenotype. In deed, treatment of mice with selective VEGF receptor specific kinase inhibitor, SU5416, inhibited tumor growth in nude mice.

During the last year (Year 4), we investigated whether the angiogenic 'switch' of VEGF-ROSE cells can be balanced by genetically regulated expression of an antiangiogenic molecule. For this purpose, a tetracycline regulated expression cassette was generated. VEGF-ROSE cells were transduced with Tet-operated endostatin expression vector. Initial studies focused on tetracycline-induced expression of endostatin *in vitro* (Fig. 1).

Results :

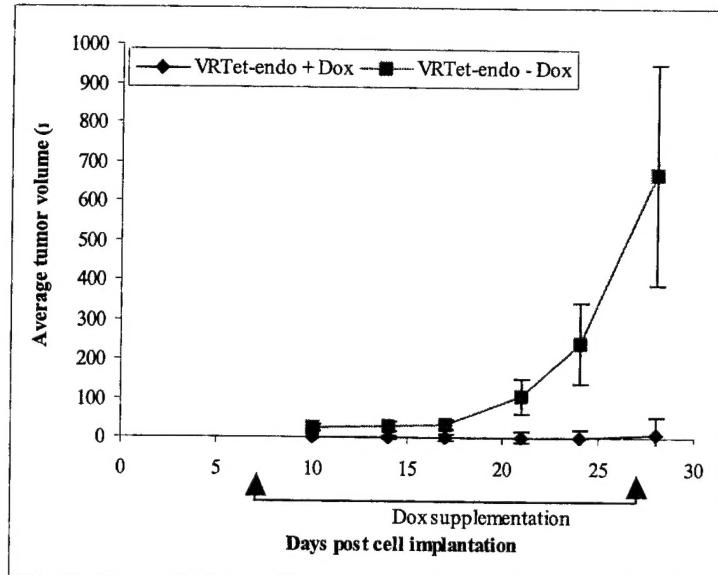
Fig. 1 shows the endostatin expression in VEGF-ROSE cells when treated with different concentrations of doxycycline. Up to 500 ng/ml of doxycycline there was a concentration-dependent stimulation of endostatin secretion as determined by a specific ELISA. At very high concentration, endostatin secretion was inhibited due to toxicity.

Fig. 1. Tetracycline-induced secretion of endostatin in VRTet cells.



After validating the that tet-operated expression of endostatin did not alter growth kinetics of transfected cells, we embarked on investigating the tumorigenic potential of this cell line. If proangiogenic phenotype of VEGF-ROSE cells were to be balanced by the secretion of endostatin, we expect reversal of tumorigenic phenotype. To test this hypothesis, athymic nude mice (20, female mice) were subcutaneously injected with VRTet-endo cells. Mice were then randomized into two groups of 10 each. After 7 days, one group of mice was treated with doxycyclin in sucrose containing drinking water. The second group of mice served as a control. Tumor growth was followed by caliper measurements at regular intervals. Data in Fig. 2 show the tumor growth profile. Mice drinking regular water showed tumor growth reaching a volume of 700 mm³ by day 28. On the other hand the mice drinking doxycycline-containing water showed complete suppression of tumor growth. These studies clearly demonstrate that balancing the angiogenic potential of VEGF-ROSE cells by secretion of endostatin completely reverse the tumorigenic phenotype.

Fig. 2 . Doxycycline induced expression of endostatin completely suppresses VEGF-ROSE tumor growth in nude mice.



(6) KEY RESEARCH ACCOMPLISHMENTS :

VEGF-secreting ROSE cells were stably transfected with tetracycline inducible endostatin constructs.

Induced expression of endostatin was confirmed.

Growth kinetic of cells were compared to confirm no change in doubling rate in transduced cells.

Tumor growth inhibition by tetracycline-induced expression of endostatin was investigated.

(7) REPORTABLE OUTCOMES :

Manuscript in preparation summarizing these studies.

(9) **CONCLUSIONS** : Secretion of VEGF gives a selective advantage for non-tumorigenic ovarian surface epithelial cell line to become tumorigenic. Formation of malignant ascites is clearly associated with VEGF secretion, which is a characteristic of ovarian cancer. When angiogenic potential is balanced by the production of antiangiogenic molecule in the same cells, the tumorigenic potential was reverted. These studies suggest the important role of VEGF in ovarian cancer development. Furthermore, these studies provide evidence for the potential reversal of tumorigenic phenotype by co-expression of an antiangiogenic molecule, endostatin.

(10) **REFERENCES** :

(11) **APPENDIX** :